Ten Top Tips for Using Media Wisely

Become a critical media consumer and examine your own media use. You are a role model as you select various forms of media and programs. Limit the amount of time spend watching, carefully select programs and avoid indiscriminate viewing when children are around.

Set guidelines for your family. Choose what television programs and videos to watch, what video games to play, what music to hear. Choose by the program, not by the time of day. Make TV watching an interactive family event and talk about what you see and hear.

Teach your children to analyze and evaluate commercial messages. Apply guidelines to all forms of media.

Watch at least one episode of your children's favorite programs. Ask children what



programs, movies, cartoons, video games and music they like and what they don't. Empower your children by allowing them to make some viewing decisions, contingent upon parental approval. Discover and discuss their impressions of favorite programs and the characters involved.

Be aware of your children's media use outside your home. Communicate your standards and help educate other parents and others who care for your children.

Use the VCR to tape programming for children to watch alone. Explain to your children what you consider high-quality programs, films, video games, and music.

Raise awareness of violent and cruel acts in the media. Talk about whether the real-life consequences of violent acts were shown and discuss nonviolent solutions. Create nonviolent endings to violent scripts. When appropriate, talk back to your TV as you watch. Talk about how characters solve their problems. Talk about violence in video games and discuss alternate ways to

resolve conflict.

Enrich your children's lives with other activities. Encourage reading, music-making, hobbies, sports, and social activities. Active playtime is crucial for proper brain and body development.

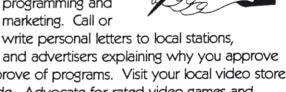


Avoid using TV videos or video games as a reward or punishment. Doing so attaches a value to viewing or playing that may make it more desirable.

If content is offensive, change the channel or turn off the TV. Teach your children to do the same in the absence of a parent or other responsible

adult.

Have a voice in programming and marketing. Call or



networks and advertisers explaining why you approve or disapprove of programs. Visit your local video store and arcade. Advocate for rated video games and creative, education CD ROMS. Express your views. Get involved!

Remember: In an age of rapidly developing new technologies, media literacy is a critical parenting skill.

Sources: Center for Media Literacy, National Alliance for Nonviolent Programming, Minnesota Medical Association.